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OBEDIENCE TO MAGISTRATES INCULCATED.

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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ANCIENT AND HONORABLE

ARTILLERY COMPANY,

JUNE 1, 1840,

BEING THE 202^d ANNIVERSARY.

By DANIEL SHARP,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH IN CHARLES STREET, BOSTON.

BOSTON:

GOULD, KENDALL AND LINCOLN.

1840.

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Colonel WILLIAM MITCHELL, *1st Lieutenant*.
Lieutenant ISAAC CAREY, *2d Lieutenant*.
Major SAMUEL A. ALLEN, *Adjutant*.

1840.

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Major GEORGE M. THACHER, *Adjutant*.

WILLIAM S. DAMRELL, PRINTER,
No. 9 Cornhill, Boston.

DISCOURSE.

TITUS 3: 1.

PUT THEM IN MIND TO BE SUBJECT TO PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS,
TO OBEY MAGISTRATES.

ALL who study the Bible, and perceive the beauty and utility of its truths, must admire and reverence it. Every year of my life, since I possessed the power of reflection, has wrought in me a more thorough and settled conviction, that it is what it claims to be, a revelation from God. It exhibits to my own mind internal marks of its divine origin. Its facts, its commands, its prohibitions, its sanctions, encouraging the practice of virtue and dissuading from vice,—and its invitations to those who have wandered from the paths of rectitude to return and confide in his mercy, are such as we might expect from an infinitely wise and benevolent Creator.

There is one peculiar excellence of Scripture, indicative of its divine origin. Its counsels and precepts are suited to all the circumstances and relations in which human beings can be placed. Claiming to be a

revelation from the "Father of all," it is addressed and adapted to all. No one is so obscure or low as to be overlooked; and no one, however exalted his station, or however absolute his authority over his fellow-men, is so high, but that he is addressed as equally accountable to God with the humblest individual.

While the Bible appeals to each conscience separately, it addresses the race; and, as human nature is essentially the same under all its modifications, it not only inculcates specific duties, suitable to particular relations and states of society, but those general principles of morality and religion, which are alike obligatory, in a barbarous or a polished age, under a monarchy, or within the government of a republic. It takes cognizance both of the private and of the public relations of life; and describes and enforces the appropriate duties of each. It commands children to honor their parents, and to yield to them a ready and affectionate obedience; it requires parents to support, protect, instruct and govern their children. It enjoins on servants fidelity, diligence and respect; and on masters justice, equity and kindness. It teaches husbands to love their wives and not to be bitter against them; and it instructs wives to be in subjection to their own husbands.

Having recognized these intimate and endearing relations, and established the principles by which they are to be regulated, the Bible has provided general laws in regard to those political relations, which mutual safety and mutual interests have rendered necessary. It is not good for man to be alone. The wants of his

social nature cannot be met without society. But such are his passions, his prejudices, his pride, his vanity and his selfishness, that he needs laws to regulate his more enlarged intercourse; otherwise, what is a real blessing, and conducive to his social progress, would prove a constant calamity. To meet this exigency, rules of action are enjoined, which are to regulate the wider circles of human intercourse.

As "order is Heaven's first law," and as there can be no order in the social state without an acknowledged authority, so soon as there were human beings, the right and the power to govern were ordained of God. He has not, indeed, prescribed an unchangeable *form* of government; that may be modified by the changes which occur in human affairs, and the peculiar circumstances of different nations. A form of government, well adapted to one condition of society, might, under other circumstances, be extremely injurious. I sincerely believe, that our republican system is more rational, equitable, less oppressive, and better adapted to elevate the condition of the people,—to secure their rights and to promote the general weal,—than any other form of authority on earth; and yet I could point to nations, where, owing to the ignorant and low condition of the inhabitants generally, our free institutions would be any thing but a blessing. The Ruler of the universe has not fixed the form of government; but he has established certain unchangeable principles, by which government shall be both exercised and obeyed. These are, that they who frame and execute the laws, shall be guided

by justice, equity and reason; and that they who are thus governed, shall quietly and cheerfully submit to existing authority.

Permit me, then, on this occasion, to call your attention to the Christian duty of obedience to magistrates; and to the reasons by which this duty is enforced.

I. Let us consider the Christian duty of obedience to magistrates.

I have selected this topic, from a painful conviction that there is, throughout our States, a growing spirit of insubordination. Unless I mistake the character of the times, there is an alarming impatience of legal restraints,—a dissatisfaction with laws, which for the most part have worked well,—and a violent desire for experiments in legislation, the tendency of which, to sober minds, is of very doubtful character. Although we may not despair of the Republic, yet I sometimes fear we may find ourselves on a sea of uncertainty, exposed to the conflicting waves of sectional jealousies and interests, and of mere party passions and untried theories. Happy shall we be, if at last we are conducted to a quiet and safe haven. My fears do not arise from attempts to improve the laws, by those who are legally qualified; but from that open infringement and defiance of the laws, and that contempt of authority and of social order, which have been witnessed so frequently, in almost all our large cities, within a few years.

Allow me, then, to offer a few remarks *on the nature of submission to the civil authority*. It is a duty repeatedly and explicitly enjoined in the Scriptures;

even on those who were under peculiar temptations to act otherwise. For the disciples of Christ, in the days of the apostles, were deprived of their just rights. The civil authority was arrayed against them. They felt its power for evil—not for good. Nevertheless, all attempts at insurrection, or at disturbing the public peace, were forbidden them. They were to “maintain consciences void of offence towards God;” but in all civil matters they were to obey magistrates.

The duty of obedience to magistrates has, indeed, its limits. If, forgetting their proper sphere, they legislate for consciences, and prescribe articles of faith and modes of worship, in which we have no belief, then we are bound to disobey. We owe an allegiance to God above all human allegiance. This we are not at liberty to exchange for any of the advantages of civil government. When the magistrate commands us to do what we believe God has forbidden, we ought to say, with calm and immovable dignity, as did the apostles, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” We must not comply with any requisitions of the magistrate which would bring guilt upon our consciences; neither must we offer violent resistance to such requisitions. It is our duty to remonstrate, to appeal to our natural and inalienable rights,—and to advocate in the face of the world, with all meekness, and yet with boldness, the claims of God and the rights of conscience; and having thus discharged our duty, if the magistrate exercise his authority to harm us in one city, we may flee to another. If spoiled of our goods, we must take it, not wrathfully but joyfully.

It seems to me, that the disciples of Christ were forbidden to use carnal weapons in defence of spiritual principles.

There is, indeed, no danger that any magistrate in our country will ever attempt to invade the rights of conscience. Our laws clothe no one with so dangerous a power. Our social compact forbids its exercise. The common mind is unalterably arrayed against this form of usurpation. The day has passed, never to return, in which men were proscribed, and rendered liable to civil disabilities, on account of their religious opinions. In regard to religious liberty, I have always been a disciple of the statesman, who sent forth the maxim to the world,—“we need not fear error, while reason is left free to combat it.” But if we had reason to fear its propagation, still I would contend for the political right and liberty of propagating it; because it is not the sword of the magistrate, but the weapon of truth, which can arrest the progress of error; because no magistrate has a right to decide for me what truth or error is; and because all past history teaches, that the magistrate is as likely to employ his power in suppressing truth as error. Nay, more; the interposition of the magistrate, in this case, may be more mischievous than the advocacy of error itself. It was under the plea of suppressing error, that the Saviour of mankind was crucified. It was under the same pretext, that the apostles were scourged, imprisoned, and doomed to martyrdom.

When Henry the Eighth received from his Holiness at Rome the title of “Defender of the Faith,” his

court jester, perceiving that he was elated with his new honor, said to his majesty, “My good Harry, let thee and me defend each other, and let the faith alone to defend itself.” How happy would it have been, both for the church and the world, had magistrates and legislators exercised the sound philosophy, the good temper, and the regard for human rights, manifested by the salaried fool of Henry the Eighth!

But while in matters of conscience we must disobey the civil magistrate, rather than displease God, in civil cases we are commanded to “submit to the powers that be.” Laws which appertain to the defence of the state; to the protection of life and property; to the rights of individuals, and the fulfilment of contracts; the suppression of public vice; the punishment of offenders; and the maintenance of peace and good order, are sacredly to be obeyed. Every one will admit that good laws should be obeyed. But if there are laws which are deemed by some of the citizens to be arbitrary, unequal, injurious to certain branches of trade, and unduly favoring other interests, are these laws to be obeyed? It seems to me that, so long as they remain in the statute book unrepealed, reason, revelation, and the necessity of the case, unite in affirming they must be obeyed. “Whosoever resisteth the power,” says the apostle, “resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation.” Objections to a law may be reasonable and just. It may be very desirable to have it legally abolished. But it cannot be forcibly resisted, without disturbing

the peace, and creating far greater evils than would the operation of an unjust or unreasonable law. If one class of men have a right to resist the execution of a law, because it is deemed oppressive or injurious to their interests, another class, under the same pretext, may resist some other law; or an excited and indignant multitude may urge the law's uncertainty, and its delay in inflicting punishment, and consider themselves justified in assuming the offices of judge, jury and executioner; or, from a strong but misdirected sympathy, they may forcibly release from the officers of justice one who has been tried and convicted by a jury of his countrymen. It must be obvious, were scenes like these to occur frequently and with impunity, there would be an end of government, and anarchy would be the order of the day.

It is the duty of every one to bow to the majesty of the laws. If a law be considered unjust by any number of citizens, they have an unquestioned right, nay, it is their solemn duty, to assemble together and speak of its demerits. By appeals to their fellow-citizens; by petitions and remonstrances to the Legislature; and by voting for men who will sustain their own views, they may seek a repeal of the offensive statute. If these means fail, there ought to be a peaceful acquiescence. It is our duty "to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." In other words, we should quietly submit to the laws, so long as they are in force. Nor should they ever be annulled, except by those who are legally authorized to annul them.

II. Is it asked, why should magistrates be obeyed? I answer,—

1. Magistracy is an ordinance of Heaven. "The powers that be are ordained of God." He has, from a wise and benevolent regard for the happiness of his creatures, instituted social order. Many of the civil and judicial laws of the Hebrews were framed by his inspired servants; and were admirably adapted to the condition of that early period. He has planted in man that reason and power of forethought, and that desire of self-preservation, which prompt him to seek the shelter of government, and the protection of law. And although the power of the magistrate, like every other boon from Heaven, may be perverted, yet magistracy itself is always necessary. As our legislators, even with honest intentions, may be unduly biassed by party, and by local and personal considerations, the laws they frame may receive a part of their character from these influences. They may be the result of narrow views, favoring one class at the expense of others, or vexatiously interfering with personal rights, or the privacies of domestic life. Nevertheless, as government is a divine institution, the execution of law is not to be violently resisted. Such was the argument employed by the apostle Peter. He exhorted his brethren to submit to the laws, not because their own interests had been consulted and promoted by their rulers, but from a regard to God, as the institutor of civil government. Hence, except at some great and dangerous crisis, a fear of disturbing that social order which is pleasing to

him, should deter us from all acts of resistance and violence.

2. The benefits which civil government confers, furnish a reason why we should submit to its authority.

"The magistrate is the minister of God to thee for good." He is so in several respects. He prevents evil, and he maintains peace and good order. It is a melancholy fact, that there are many in every populous community, who "neither fear God nor regard man." They are lovers of pleasure, and they disregard the obligations of honesty. They abuse the confidence of the inexperienced and unsuspecting, and, for the sake of momentary but guilty joys, destroy the innocence and peace of their guileless victims, and send shame and unutterable sorrow through entire family circles. There are others, who so completely surrender themselves to the passion for acquiring wealth, to an envious spirit, or to vindictive tempers, that they are constantly disposed to trespass on the rights, the property, and the reputation of their neighbors. And they would thus trespass, but the law interposes. It draws the lines over which they are forbidden to pass. Encroaching beyond these limits, the arm of justice seizes them, and the punishment annexed to the violation of the law is inflicted. It is thus that "rulers are a terror to evil doers." Were it not for the fear of punishment, and the degradation consequent on public conviction and imprisonment for crime, the community would be in a most fearful condition. The idle would live on the wages of the industrious; the profligate would laugh

at the tears and anguish of female weakness and innocence; the plunderer would disturb our midnight repose; the revengeful would attack us in the street, or set fire to our dwellings; and the envious would slander and rob us of our good name. But against this terrible flood of evils, which would send misery and desolation through the length and breadth of the land, civil government raises its embankments, and we are safe, peaceful and happy.

If you would have just impressions of a state of society without a settled government and well defined laws, look back on revolutionary France, in the days of Robespierre, Danton and Marat, when, in the sacred name of Liberty, thousands of human beings were butchered, whose blood ran along the streets like rills of water after a summer shower. There are, no doubt, in our own country, many unprincipled men, who, if they imagined the mounds of the law could be broken down with impunity, would, like so many tigers, spring from their lurking places, and seize on every thing that is lovely and valuable, with lustful and rapacious hands. It is under this deep conviction of the utility of government in over-awing the vicious, and arresting the progress of injustice and cruelty, while it protects with its broad shield the orderly and the virtuous, that I would, in trumpet tones, "put my fellow-citizens in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."

The magistrate is also invested with power to inflict punishment on those who break the laws. "He

beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the servant of God,—an avenger to execute punishment upon him that doeth evil.” The only construction which I can put upon these passages is, that the magistrate not only bears the sword as a badge of authority, but is bound, by his obligations to God and to his fellow-citizens, to unsheath and wield it, and to command other forces to his aid, when the peace and safety of the community cannot be otherwise maintained. I am aware that other sentiments, to some extent, prevail. It is gravely and earnestly asserted, that we must not, under any circumstances, resist evil. It is contended that we have no right, either in defence of our own persons, our families, or our country, to jeopard or take the life of others. I have no sympathy whatever with these views. Their tendency is to weaken the right arm of the nation, and to undermine government. The limits of a discourse will not allow me to enter into the general merits of this question; nor is it necessary,—as the whole subject has been ably and eloquently discussed by some who have addressed you on former occasions. But I may just glance at the effects which this experiment of non-resistance would produce on the administration of law and justice within the Commonwealth. Law would become mere advice,—for you are prohibited, by this ultra peace principle, to enforce its penalties. You are to reason with the thief,—the house-breaker,—the swindler,—the incendiary, and persuade him to make reparation, and amend his ways. But, unless he quietly surrender himself, you

must not lay hands upon him. This would be to “resist evil.” And if, in the hope of being acquitted, he appears in court, and is sentenced to imprisonment, you must not use even a constable’s staff to compel his acquiescence. It would be very sinful and unchristian, even for a constable, were it the only means of securing him, to strike a man who had murdered your father, seduced your daughter, or set fire to your house at midnight. You must proceed no farther than to announce to him, that he has been sentenced to one year’s solitary confinement, and afterwards to hard labor and imprisonment during the remainder of his natural life. You may express a hope, that like a good citizen, he will go peaceably and without the least reluctance to prison, at the same time acknowledging that your enlightened views and elevated principles will not allow you to do more than to take him by the arm and show him the way, and that, if he offer resistance, you must relinquish your hold of him as a hopeless subject.

In such an improved state of legislation, with such a benevolent judiciary, and such considerate, unarmed and reasonable constables, who does not see that every one would pay his debts,—that those who had hitherto been fraudulent would become honest,—that now, there being no punishment for idleness and crime, every one would become industrious and virtuous? What millennial prospects for thieves, house-breakers, highwaymen and profligates! Our venerable Commonwealth, as to numbers at least, would be in a flourishing condition. For, so long as

we had any property left, our population would daily increase by emigrants from other States, of a character a little worse than those who gathered themselves to David, "every one in distress, and every one in debt, and every one feeling discontented," and every offender, disliking those inhuman laws which doom criminals to punishment, would seek shelter under the wings of such a pacific and paternal government.

To be serious. I cannot for a moment suppose, that either our Saviour or his apostles, ever avowed or advocated the principles of non-resistance, as they are avowed and advocated at the present day. That they forbade malice and revenge, cannot be doubted; that they prohibited private quarrels and the indulgence of vindictive passions, is equally true; and that they inculcated the forgiveness of injuries, the love of enemies, and the patient endurance of unavoidable evils for Christ and for conscience sake, is obvious. But I have never received the impression from any of their communications, that they ever discountenanced applications for legal protection, or for a legal redress of wrongs, when there might be the least probability of obtaining either. Nor do I recollect any intimation in the New Testament that the magistrate has not the right to maintain the peace, to defend the state from foreign invasion, and to sustain the law, if need be, by force of arms. If I understand the apostle Paul, the power to punish evil doers, is urged as an argument for subjection to civil rulers, and as a motive why subjects should avoid all infractions of the law. Had he believed in the modern doctrine of non-resistance, he

would have expatiated on the iniquity of the magistrate bearing a sword at all. He would have called upon him to throw it away. He would not have coupled his being "a servant of God," with his being "an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." He would have said, "If thou doest evil, be afraid; for the magistrate beareth not the quill in vain. For he is the minister of God, not to raise the arm of justice, but to lift up the voice of remonstrance and persuasion to him that doeth evil."

Although I thus speak, I always have been, and am, an advocate of peace. I have devoted my life to the announcement and illustration of principles which, if practically regarded, would secure universal peace. I believe, that wars have had their origin in false notions of honor, in the vindictive passions of princes and courtiers, in unworthy national prejudices, in the unprincipled desire of conquest and enlargement of territory, and in the absurd and dangerous custom of allowing monarchs, on their individual responsibility, to proclaim war, instead of entrusting this most momentous of all civil acts to the representatives of the people, whose sympathies for their fellow-subjects,—whose sense of responsibility, and regard for the interests of their constituents,—would have operated as so many checks to prevent war, and as so many incitements to devise measures for peace.

I need not dwell on the folly and wickedness of war. It settles no questions or principles of right or wrong. It is a contest of mere skill or of physical force, not of principles. The great battle of Waterloo,

in which the armies of Europe were collected, and met in deadly strife, settled no principles. It decided the fate of Napoleon, and dictated to the French nation what should be their government, and who should be their king; but it did not prove Napoleon to be the friend or enemy of France. Nor did it prove that the Bourbons were fit or unfit to sit on the throne of their ancestors. War is not only foolish, but wicked. Besides having its origin in pride, envy, cupidity, and other evil passions, it inflicts indescribable misery, and diffuses a most demoralizing influence. I therefore rejoice in the prevalence of peace principles, and confidently look forward to the time when war will cease to be "a game which monarchs or party politicians will play at," at the expense and ruin of the people. "The schoolmaster is abroad;" the people begin to feel they are men, and that they have rights and interests which hereafter, both in the domestic and foreign policy of their rulers, must be regarded. I therefore see in vision, that an enlightened self-interest, the establishment of more popular forms of government in the older nations, and every where a higher Christian morality, will ultimately render this scourge of the human race universally unpopular and odious. But until that period arrives, it would not be wise in us to turn our "swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks." In the present condition of the world, this would be to invite aggression. If it be asserted, that the Lord will protect those who shall rely unlimitedly on peace principles, my answer must be, that I know no facts in all past

history which would justify the nation in neglecting the means of defence, or in expecting the miraculous protection of Heaven. And I freely confess, that were an enemy on our coast, I should retire to sleep feeling more secure, and trusting Providence with greater calmness, knowing that we had a gallant navy, forts well manned, and our shores lined with citizen soldiers, commanded by the members of this "Ancient and Honorable Company," and other officers, than I should, were I apprized of the appalling facts that our ships of war were dismantled and laid up in ordinary, that our forts were decayed and defenceless, and that our militia, once the pride of our State, had become discouraged by neglect, and virtually disorganized by short-sighted views of utility, and false and dangerous notions of economy. It is reported of Cromwell, that on the eve of a battle against the king's forces, as it was a damp and rainy season, and knowing from the fanaticism of his soldiers that they needed caution, he closed a powerful religious exhortation, by repeating, as he passed along the line, "Trust in the Lord, and keep your powder dry!" So would I say, "Confide in the Almighty, but improve yourselves in military tactics; stand to your arms, and give, if need be, a practical illustration, that by the sword you seek peace, the peace of freemen."

I am for peace. In all cases of national difficulty, I would leave no conciliatory measures untried. Were I the executive, I would, if possible, select an impartial, friendly and judicious power, to whom I would submit the question now in dispute between Great Britain

and the United States, with such limitations as not to compromise the national honor. Could I gain the ear of Maine and of the general government, I would say, *give or sell* the British a strip of land for a highway to Canada, sooner than have a war which would cost millions of treasure, which would occasion the depression of trade, the sacrifice of human life, and a great deterioration of morals. Nevertheless, should conciliatory measures prove unsuccessful, and the national government be forced into a war, I trust every American would do his duty. I prefer the pulpit to any other place, but were any power to invade us, if either my example or words were needed, I would with the utmost alacrity appear in the tented field. I would pray to the Almighty that he would defend the right; and I would rouse the spirits of my fellow-citizens to the contest. It would be our sacred duty to do all in our power to keep any foe at a harmless distance; and should he still persist in approaching our coast, I trust that some naval hero, like the brave and gallant Perry, on Lake Erie, will send the heart-stirring news, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

3. There is another and special reason why Americans should abstain from all acts of insubordination, namely, the character of our political institutions. We are governed not by persons claiming a divine right to rule over us, nor by the edicts of a usurper or an autocrat; but by written laws, made by men elected by us for this purpose. They are supposed to know, and appointed to represent, our interests. If, then,

any of these laws seem unjust or oppressive, we have the means of abolishing them in a legal manner. We may change the law-making power, and thus change or abolish an obnoxious law.

There is, therefore, with us, not the shadow of an excuse for contempt of public authority, or for a violent disturbance of the public peace. If the Christian subjects of heathen despots were exhorted to "submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," we are inexcusable, if we refuse to submit to ordinances established by our own public servants,—especially as we have the power to dismiss these servants, and to appoint those who will consult our views in connection with a just regard for the general good. Every act of insubordination is an offence, not merely against the magistrate, but against the sovereign people. Every patriot,—every one who has a stake in the good of society,—every lover of peace and order, should lift up his voice against the spirit and the reign of insubordination. No tyranny is so much to be feared, and no acts so much to be dreaded, as those of a tumultuous populace. When such a multitude seizes the reins of power, ignorance is arrayed against intelligence, and vice against virtue, and idle poverty against industriously acquired wealth. It is then, that reason is drowned in the clamors of passion, and the work of destruction has no bound, except what arises from the physical impotency of a misguided and maddened crowd.

Let it never be forgotten, that the effect of such turbulent scenes is unfavorable to the extension of

rational freedom in other countries. Despotie governments become strengthened, and the friends of true liberty intimidated and appalled. They dare not give utterance to generous sentiments concerning personal rights, or recommend low pressure principles of government; for their confidence in man's capacity for self-control is weakened, when they hear from afar that they who possess the highest degree of liberty are bursting the restraints of equal laws, treating magistrates with contempt, and trampling their fellows in the dust. Let us, my friends, of whatever party, give all our influence against such a state of things. Let the divine maxim,—“Tribute to whom tribute—honor to whom honor—custom to whom custom,”—regulate our conduct in regard to all entrusted with authority.

And let us be careful not only to obey magistrates ourselves, but not unnecessarily to provoke others to disobedience. Human legislation must, from the nature of the case, leave many evils unprohibited. It provides only against the grosser encroachments on the reputation, liberty, property and persons of others. There are many forms of anger, malice, strife, insult, evil speaking and unruly manners, against which there is no human law—no penalty; and yet, when these forms of evil are persisted in, the public passions are inflamed, a feeling of resentment is kindled, and, having no legal redress, they who are insidiously attacked, and whose feelings are outraged, redress themselves. Under these circumstances, cruel enormities are perpetrated. Here the gospel comes to

our aid. By its mild spirit and benevolent precepts, it supplies the defects of human laws. It commands us to be ready to every good work; to suppress envy, anger and evil speaking; and, if possible, to “live peaceably with all men.” It exhorts every man to *please*, not to *affront*, his neighbor, for his good to edification. He who cultivates the kind and gentle tempers, and pursues the circumspect course, recommended in the gospel, will neither disturb the public peace himself, nor provoke others to do so. For the most part, it is not the pursuit of a good object which brings down the popular wrath, but the *manner* and *temper* with which that object is pursued. If we go forth to reform evils which ought to be reformed, with reproaches, and menaces, and denunciations, we shall be reproached, and menaced, and denounced, in return. If we revile others, we shall be reviled. But if we go forth with a zeal attempered with wisdom,—although our motives and purposes may at first be misunderstood,—we shall outlive suspicion, and command the respect of those who dissent from us. Such was the conduct of the apostle Paul. He was faithful, yet courteous; bold in his defence of the gospel, yet punctilious in observing all the forms of respect due to those in official station. His object was to convince, not to exasperate. He won the attention of men by a decorous and bland demeanor, and yet roused their consciences by a plain and cogent exhibition of truth. How many infractions on the public peace might have been avoided, if those who consider themselves “the only faithful among the

faithless" had imitated the *spirit* and *manner* of Christ and his apostles.

Allow me, also, to remark, that unions and combinations of particular classes and interests, arraying themselves against other classes and interests, and against portions of their own who do not submit to their dictation, are indirectly if not directly subversive of the legitimate purposes of government; they interrupt public tranquillity, and tend to anarchy. I enter not into the merits of particular cases. It is the *mode* of redress that I condemn. There is not an appeal to reason, or justice, or fairness, but a resort to intimidation, to threats, and to violence, which are as likely to be employed in an unjust as a just cause, and which, after all, do not ultimately secure their end. Because that which is yielded to fear or force is sure to be taken back when fear subsides, and when compulsion is withdrawn. What cannot be effected by reasoning, remonstrance and mutual agreement, should never be sought by menaces and the destruction of property.

But the evils of combination are not confined to labor and trades. Their deleterious influence extends to public objects, professedly good. The fashion of the age is, to profess nothing and do nothing without societies. The effect of this is to destroy personal independence and individual action and responsibility. As corporate bodies are said to have no souls, so it is feared that many societies, ostensibly established for laudable objects, are in the same humiliating predicament. Feeling strong in numbers, they say things

and assent to measures, of which in their individual capacity they would be ashamed. If there be any misgivings, or occasional reproaches of conscience, these soon subside, for each one shelters himself under the wings of his brethren. He is comforted with the thought that he is hidden in the crowd. The reliance is on majorities, not on immutable principles of truth and goodness. The scrupulous adoption of right means in pursuing a right end is disregarded, in the confidence of possessing the power to accomplish the end. Hence the danger of forsaking those honest and lofty principles of action, which distinguished the men of a former age, and of substituting an unthinking acquiescence of the many to the dogmas and measures of the few; and these few irresponsible, because they stand behind the scenes, and touch the wires which move others to do, what under their own names they would not dare publicly to approve. This state of things is filling the country with aristocracies of all sorts and degrees, and, should it continue, it will be the means of thrusting forward to public notice and action, the ignorant, the self-conceited and the ill-mannered, and of giving to many an importance, to which on the score either of character or services they have no title. Already it is producing an incessant agitation of the public mind, and improperly influencing, if not completely overawing, the deliberations of legislative bodies. Candidates for important offices are catechised, and a confession is demanded, not of their political faith, but of their belief in the different opin-

ions and objects for the promotion of which special societies are established; thus tempting political men to concealment, to hypocrisy, or to a committal to objects and measures for which civil government was not instituted, and creating feelings that are altogether unfavorable to sentiments of respect or obedience to magistrates.

These are some of the social evils to which we are exposed; which tend more or less perceptibly to a contempt of civil authority and to insubordination; in relation to which, as American citizens, we all need to be upon our guard.

Gentlemen of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company! Were an apology necessary for addressing you on the duty of obedience to magistrates, I might find one in the purposes of your organization. Under suitable provisions and limits, you have been commissioned and armed for the purpose of maintaining the supremacy of the laws, of suppressing insurrections and riots, and of defending the Commonwealth from encroachments and invasion. To perform these duties with alacrity and fidelity, and even at the hazard of your own lives, if necessary, you will need a thorough conviction, that the laws, even if somewhat obnoxious, must, until legally repealed, be obeyed.

Liberty, personal, civil and religious, cannot be too highly prized. I trust we shall all stand fast in that liberty with which the patriots of the Revolution made us free. But, let it be remembered, it was liberty with

law. Law resisted, under the plea of liberty, gives way to licentiousness, to anarchy; and should the crisis ever arrive when misrule prevails, it will be your duty, painful as it may be, at the call of the executive authority, to unsheathe your swords for its suppression. It is not in his own person, but in citizens lawfully armed and commanded, that the magistrate beareth not the sword in vain.

During the past year, you have been reminded by the decease of three of your number of that war from which there is no discharge. "For no man," whatever may be his skill in arms, or his bravery in battle, "hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death." The indefatigable historian of your company has been compelled to lay down his pen for ever. Another, whose heart was the seat of kind and generous affections, was delighting himself with the thoughts of home, on that sad night, when suddenly with a hundred others, he had but the fearful alternative of the burning flame or the suffocating wave. A third has been summoned from your ranks, and has left a circle of endeared friends to lament his loss.

So, each one of you, gentlemen, will sooner or later meet this powerful foe. But although you cannot elude, you may conquer him. You may change this enemy to a friend. By patient continuance in well-doing, death will be to you the introduction to endless life. He who fights the good fight of faith, in other words, he who wages war with selfishness, sensuality,

pride, envy, injustice and unkindness, and who cultivates love to God, and sincere good-will to man, in connection with penitence and a humble reliance on divine mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, may, with the apostle in the near prospect of dissolution, cherish the sublime and soul-sustaining hope, that "Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him at that day; and not to him only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Gentlemen, may this virtuous, pious and honorable career be yours; then the issue of your probationary service on earth will be triumphant and glorious.